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SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING AN EXTENSION HOMEMAKERS CLUB

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Suggestions for Organizing an Extension Homemakers Club

June Cline*

Extension Homemakers Clubs provide homemakers an opportunity for continuous informal education in a variety of areas relating to the home, family, community and country.

An Extension Homemakers Club may be organized when a group shows interest in informal education. Eight or 10 interested people may form a nucleus for a club:

1. When a group wishes to have its own club because of a desire for informal education relating to problems of the home or family.
2. Where there is no club already organized.
3. Where there is a need for an additional club because the existing Extension Homemakers Club membership is filled to capacity.
4. When homemakers wish to meet regularly as a result of their experiences in an Extension Home Economics study group or special interest series, or as graduates of an Expanded Nutrition Program group.
5. When newcomers to a community want to meet others with mutual interests.

Extension Homemakers Clubs have a commitment to help organize other clubs to accommodate interested people. The cooperative and outgoing spirit of sponsoring a new club usually strengthens the original club.

The sponsors of a new club perform a community service that is worthwhile and important. They strive to create for the new group an atmosphere that is interesting, pleasant and purposeful.

The sponsors are *selling an idea*. Communication is vital. The message that counts is the one that gets through to prospective members that they too can become informal students of The Texas A&M University System by studying problems and solutions relating to the home and family.

Before the First Meeting

Personal Contact

Names of persons showing an interest in the purpose of an Extension Homemakers Club might be obtained from an audience list of a previous community program or workshop sponsored by the family living committee. These names may be referred to the expansion com-

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mittee or a council officer. Contact with these people may be made (in person is best) to determine:

1. If enough interest exists to organize a club.
2. Names and addresses of homemakers in the community who may be interested (10-20 names).
3. The name of the person in the community most likely to get response in calling a meeting.

Planning the Meeting

1. Arrange for a meeting place. Determine whether the interested persons will feel freer to come to a public meeting place or to a home.
2. Choose a suitable date and time. Sometimes homemakers prefer morning sessions or evening sessions. Employed homemakers may prefer 5:30 p.m. meetings.
3. Make plans for the expansion committee to personally invite each person on the list, explaining that the meeting is to discuss a new club, but attendance does not obligate a person to join.
4. An informal brunch or coffee with five or six present at the first meeting makes a workable nucleus.
5. Make plans for a babysitter so that young homemakers can attend.
6. Explain Extension Homemakers Club work and allow time for answering questions. Plan time for a short action group.

Involve County Extension Agents in Meeting Plans

1. Decide on a demonstration to be given at the organizational meeting as a means of explaining the informal education of Extension Homemakers work. A neighborhood club leader may be invited to present a current club program, or the county Extension agent may present a program.
2. The county Extension agent will write a letter to prospective members explaining the need expressed by homemakers in the community to learn more about home economics and the purpose of Extension Homemakers Clubs.
3. Plan a meeting outline stating clearly the responsibilities of those involved. (It is helpful for a club member of the same age and with the same interests as the prospective club members to attend the organizational meeting even if the member is not on the expansion committee.)
4. County Extension agents may take materials and visual aids, such as Extension Homemakers Club yearbooks, leaflets and a blackboard, to the meeting.
5. Make final arrangements with the hostess and leader giving the demonstration.

At the First Meeting

The first contact may be with the county Extension agent and the person who agrees to hold an organizational meeting in his or her home.

The organizational meeting begins when the first person arrives. The expansion committee or the sponsoring clubs should make every effort to meet each person and see that all are introduced to each other. Keep the meeting informal. The local key person may tell why the meeting was called and introduce the person who will preside.

Suggested Procedure

- Avoid formal meeting order.
- Explain Extension Homemakers Club work.
- Present a short home economics demonstration.
- Explain affirmative action policies.
- Encourage discussion about forming a new club and allow the people to make the decision.

Important Points to Emphasize

- Purpose of the club—continued education of homemakers with home economics information, inspiration, recreation and association.
- How the program subjects for Extension Homemakers Club meetings are selected.
- Relationship to the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and The Texas A&M University System.
- Relationship to the county Extension Homemakers Council.
- Relationship to the Texas Extension Homemakers Association.
- Donations from clubs which are members of the Texas Extension Homemakers Association are encouraged but not required.

Enrolling Members

Being present should not obligate a person to become a member of a new club. Distributing membership cards to sign is usually more tactful and effective than asking people to commit themselves orally. In addition, the cards provide written information for the secretary's book and for the county Extension agent. Ask homemakers to fill in the card completely.

If a person seems hesitant to enroll and the meeting lags, adjourn for a more casual discussion. Sometimes a more effective conversation takes place after a meeting. The people can decide if they would like to meet again to complete the organization. If so, they might select a temporary chairman and a program topic, then set a time and place for the next meeting.

Election of Officers

When eight or 10 people have decided to organize an Extension Homemakers Club, they elect a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and county Extension Homemakers Council delegate.

All people should become acquainted before electing officers. If the people are shy about nominating officers, they may prefer to nominate by written ballot. Every enrolled member may write the name of a member they think will qualify for an office. Voting may be done by written ballot also.

Frequently, officers are nominated at the first meeting and elected at the second meeting.

Persons may volunteer or be elected or appointed by the group to act as program leaders for the year. People who volunteer because the subject matter is of particular interest to them make the best program leaders.

Duties of Officers

President. The president presides at all club meetings, appoints standing committees and fills vacancies. This officer calls special meetings and performs other duties such as attending the county Extension Homemaker Council.

Vice-President. The vice-president performs the duties of the president in the president's absence and additional duties as assigned by the president. In addition, the vice-president serves as program chairman.

Secretary. The secretary keeps accurate minutes of all club meetings and files all committee reports. This officer keeps an official roll and handles correspondence and reports.

Treasurer. The treasurer receives and holds all funds belonging to the club and distributes the funds as authorized by the approved budget. All disbursements must be made by check. The treasurer makes a full report at the request of the president.

Council Delegates. The delegates to the county Extension Homemakers Council are the president and one elected member. They serve as a two-way communication system between the club and council. The president makes the report from club. The delegates report council decisions to the club members.

Planning the Next Meeting

Arrange a place, date and hour for the regular meetings before the first meeting adjourns. If the group is small, each member may be asked to bring another prospective member to the next meeting. Many club details will need to be decided at later meetings.

Business for Future Meetings of the New Club

Go slowly in setting up the club structure. This may be done within the first several months.

1. Appoint such committees as:
 - Program—(sometimes called yearbook) to select monthly club programs from agent programs, Texas Extension Homemakers Association recommendations (packets), specialists' packets or resource people.
 - Education—to plan educational tours and encourage members to attend countywide educational programs.
 - Finance—emphasize that this is a nonprofit organization and only finances to maintain the program are encouraged.
 - Recreation—suggest that there be a period of recreation at each club meeting.
2. Decide on the club name.
3. Decide if refreshments are to be served; if so, what kind.
4. Plan for care of children during meetings.

Helping the New Club

After a new Extension Homemakers Club has its organization underway, it will probably need help and guidance from the county Extension agent or a sponsoring club. Such assistance would include:

1. Announcing meetings of new clubs by newspaper and radio.
2. Giving direction to each officer and committee chairman about the duties.
3. Helping the club to plan the year's program.
4. Encouraging leaders and officers to attend county meetings to be recognized as part of the organization and to obtain helpful information.

The sponsoring club or neighboring leader needs to keep in touch with the new club's president to answer questions and give guidance. The county Extension agent might visit the new club occasionally as an advisor. There are dangers of doing either too much or too little for a new club during the first year.

1. Divide the county into geographic areas.
 - Form a telephone committee to contact and invite each resident to a neighborhood meeting. During the same time, publicize success stories and club purposes on the radio and TV and in newspapers.
 - Distribute survey cards during the neighborhood meeting to determine interest in Extension Homemakers Club work and the preferred meeting time.
 - Send a special invitation to attend a county council sponsored tea or tour to each person indicating interest. (Make tours special and unique.)
 - Separate interest cards into geographic areas. Contact key people in each area to see if they will hold an organizational meeting in their home.
2. Announce that admission to a countywide meeting will be to bring a nonmember as a guest. Distribute survey information cards, then follow through for the new club.
3. Have each person over 35 ask a young person what things interest her. The older member then invites and brings the younger person to a meeting, such as a special interest program or Achievement Day.
4. Attend meetings of other organizations to explain Extension Homemakers work, extend invitations and follow through to organize clubs. (Example—Parent Teacher Associations or church groups)
5. Contact the telephone company or newspaper office for names of new residents. Personally offer an invitation to join an Extension Homemakers Club.
6. Contact the school principal for names of graduating seniors or school dropouts. Personally contact each young person and follow through with encouragement to participate in an Extension Homemaker Club. If possible, let one of them invite his or her friends together for a prospective club.
7. Locate one person who would be interested in Extension Homemakers work. Ask this person to have a coffee for five or six people. Explain Extension Homemakers work and ask each person to bring a friend to a meeting the following week.
8. Organize a contest between existing clubs to recruit new members or sponsor a club. Offer points for each new member. Recognize the winning club at Achievement Day.
9. Encourage members to tell a friend about the opportunities offered in Extension Homemakers Clubs and Extension Study Groups. Publicize new member's names, along with the sponsoring person or club, through monthly newsletters.
10. Expansion committee members must believe in the purpose of Extension Homemakers Club work and be willing to volunteer time and effort to reach a realistic growth goal.
11. Adopt a family concept. Each club member signs a card promising to tell another family about the program every month.
12. Organize a speakers bureau of five or six leaders who will visit other organizations to teach programs learned through leader training.

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Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap, or national origin.

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